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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author maintains that there are two interrelated levels at which one can analyze data: the political and the psychological. By bringing together the language and concepts of critical theory and relational psychology, the author proposes a method of qualitative data analysis--a discourse-to- voice-centered method--which seeks to embed the psychological concept of voice in the sociopolitical concept of discourse. To illustrate the connections between discourse and voice, the author uses the method to analyze the discursive origins and pedagogical voices of four European American women who have been recognized for their teaching in an open-admissions university serving an ethnically and economically diverse student population. Findings suggest that these women see meaning in their work in part because they have encountered discourse during their graduate work that describes human abilities as malleable and recognizes the social power of individual agency. The paper concludes with recommendations for teacher education programs that want to help preservice educators see value in teaching against the grain. (Contains 14 references.) (Author/SM)

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A discourse-to-voice-centered analysis of teaching philosophies

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I maintain that there are two interrelated levels at which we can analyze data -- the political and the psychological. By bringing together the language and concepts of critical theory and relational psychology, I propose a method of qualitative data analysis -- a discourse-to-voice-centered method -- which seeks to embed the psychological concept of voice in the socio-political concept of discourse. To illustrate the connections between discourse and voice, I use the method to analyze the discursive origins and pedagogical voices of four European American women who have been recognized for their teaching in an open-admissions university serving an ethically and economically diverse student population. My findings suggest that these women see meaning in their work in part because they have encountered discourses during their graduate work that describe human abilities as malleable and recognize the social power of individual agency. I conclude the paper with some recommendations for teacher education programs that desire to help pre-service educators see value in "teaching against the grain."

INTRODUCTION

Critical theory has compelled the social sciences and educational studies to consider deeply the roles of power in the organization, outcomes, and general 'meaning making' of educators and students (Giroux, 1997; hooks, 1994). Critical theorists hold that issues of power are evident in the discourses -- that is, the "meanings, conversations, narratives, explanations,

accounts and anecdotes" (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) -- that groups of people utilize to demonstrate their membership in and perspectives on the world (Weedon, 1997/1987). We learn and apprehend language forms through our socialization, which teaches us not only norms of behavior but preferred perceptual styles regarding the nature of reality and the possibilities for change (Brown, 1998).

While we exist in discourse-rich worlds (Bakhtin, 1981), we do experience unique thoughts. Critical theorists maintain that because so many discourses surround us and constitute our consciousness, our sense of 'I' is not unitary but shifting and even contradictory (Weedon, 1997/1987). As relational psychologists have empirically investigated, such subjective positions or 'voices' (Gilligan, 1993/1982), if carefully listened to, reveal the ways in which we have taken in the shared meaning making of our social locations. Voices, then, are the intrapsychic or psychological presence of social discourses.

Given that each person's social location can be unique to the extent that an individual encounters different social norms from their interactions with various groups, it is important to recognize the social psychological connections between discourse and voice without assuming the content either of one's discursive world or of one's psychological constitution (voice) within such a world. Thus, in order to develop an emic understanding of the discourses and voices relevant to an individual, I have developed a method that maps the discursive field (Weedon, 1997/1987) of an individual and examines how that person comes to voice within such a field.

A focus on discourse and voice is essential to good research because it has the potential to help us understand how particular educators "teach against the grain" (Cochran-Smith, 1993). That is, since we develop inside of rather than outside of discourses, for those educators who have made commitments to the disenfranchised, it is helpful for us to know and be able to trace where they get their ideological direction and sustenance. From a discourse-sensitive perspective, we can identify the bodies of knowledge, histories, shared perspectives, and interpersonal relationships which they find helpful in understanding and sustaining their commitments. Additionally, the relationship between discourse and voice allows us to see the struggles (psychological, interpersonal, and social) that such educators evidence in trying be "certain rather than uncertain allies" (Cochran-Smith, 1995) to their students who are socially disenfranchised.

In the next section of this paper, I provide analytical examples of this discourse-to-voice-centered method. The data come from a study I undertook to investigate recognized teaching at an ethnically diverse, urban, open-admissions university.[1] I conducted two rounds of semi-structured interviews with four White women, three winners and one finalist for an annual teaching award. In this project, I sought to extend the content and method of critical research in education in two ways: first, by focusing on the pedagogical practices and philosophies of college-level professors, rather than secondary level teachers; and second, by specifically examining individual beliefs in light of collective influences.

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[1] Of the 8700 students who attend the institution, 75% are students of color. About the same percentage (77%) of the faculty is White.

A DISCOURSE-TO-VOICE-CENTERED ANALYSIS

My method of analysis draws from the work of relational psychologists, who have developed a voice-centered, Listener's Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1990) for qualitative data analysis. To tap into the many voices that are constituted in interpersonal relationships and reflect political reality, these researchers utilize an analytical method that subjects interview texts to an iterative reading process. While my own method similarly builds an interpretation based on repeated readings, I explicitly begin my analyses at the level of discourse, not voice. Thus, my readings generate an analysis that examines the social locations of an interviewee and then situates the psyche ('I' voices) within those critical social influences. As a result, interpretations about the psyche are grounded in evidence about the political viewpoints which the interviewee has encountered.

In the first step of data analysis, I read through the transcripts to identify the discourses which the interviewees mention as a part of their thinking, as influences on how they see the world. I define discourses as established bodies of knowledge or perspectives which the interviewees note as originating and developed outside of themselves. Using the interviewees' words, discourses among my sample of college professors include ideas such as: "American cultural values"; the opinions of "authority figures"; the philosophy of "open admissions"; "the values of one's family"; and a "helplessness attribution." All of these discourses demonstrate the interviewee's discursive world - the varied points of views and represented interests by which she has been influenced.

The second step in data analysis centers on those areas in the transcripts where the interviewees speak about their philosophies of education. Here I focus on the speaking 'I' and the content as well as on the mechanics or form of its speech. This step entails identifying the subjective positions held by the interviewees as they speak about their beliefs. Shifts in pronoun, repeated words, and hesitations all are seen as important markers of how grounded an interviewee feels in the subjective position evidenced.

The third and final analytical step entails identifying connections between the voices of the speaking 'I' and the discourses collected in steps one and two. Doing so allows a researcher to pose and answer questions regarding the relationships and tensions between the psychological (voices) and the socio-cultural and political (discourses).

In the next section, I provide some examples of how this three-tiered approach to analysis led me to particular insights about the content and nature of the interviewees' teaching philosophies.

FINDINGS

From a list of discourses and voices for each professor, what became striking to me was how the women gravitated toward discourses that not only stressed human potential but also human responsibility. Furthermore, by applying these discourses to their own experiences -- to explain their own academic success -- these educators avoided a key problem in multicultural education -- a reification of the self-other dichotomy (Lien, 1999). Thus, these discourses emphasized the mutual obligations of teachers and learners, thus creating a common ground for solidarity.

Anna: "It could have been you."

Anna, a teaching-award-winning psychologist with ten years of college experience, explicitly notes her father as a central role model for the kind of behavior and attitudes she believes best support adult learning. The family value that he asserted was that luck, rather than innate ability, sets the stage for our lives.

> My father, who did a lot of [volunteer work], who is kind of my major tutor, I guess, always talked a lot to us about the kind of luck or chance of being born wherever one was or whoever one was. That, for example, we went to the Episcopal church, but he said, you know, had we been born in China, we would have done something else. And all of those beliefs would have been just as good.... That nothing is better than anything else; it's just different..... So I grew up just really thinking, 'Well, we are who we are by chance. We are born where we are by chance.'

This discourse of chance guided Anna's interactions during childhood as a tutor of another girl: "It was kind of like, "Well, you could have been born that girl. You could have been that girl. So what do you wish someone would have done for you?"

Her father's emphasis on chance ("It could have been you") and the obligation to see life "as an opportunity and a responsibility to use your talents" found resonance in Anna's professional training in psychology. Thus, she describes herself as "at the very edge of the environmental argument. I mean, I'm very, very much on that side of environment and effort and things like that" rather than innate intelligence as explaining life outcomes.

> I certainly don't believe that I was born with anything extraordinary, but I certainly know the value of hard work, and I've done fine. And so I feel like, I feel like the key for us as faculty at this school ... is to help [students] find out, what it means to do hard academic work.

These discourses, from her father and her training, allow her to see her students, many of whom come to college underprepared for and uncertain about university-level work, as novices who are capable of being their own "change agents." Anna "always know[s] that the people in my classes come to me with something. Perhaps quite a bit of something. A lot of expertise or, or, the kind of core of something that should always be honored." Her propensity to see students as novices rather than failures was evident when I asked her how she could see her students as choosing higher education when so many were uninformed about the norms and routines of college. Instructive in her answer is how she begins her response by describing her own journey in graduate school.

> I'll tell you, when I went back to graduate school, I was going to go in, back into the public hospital system. I had been working in a Lamaze program and I wanted to go back there. But if someone were to say, 'Well, do you think you're going to be a college professor,' I might have thought, 'Well, that's interesting but, yeah, maybe,' but I would not have had any idea what that meant. They [students] don't either. They don't know what it means to get an education. But we didn't know (chuckle). I don't see them as any different than we are.... I'm always telling my class, 'One day, one of you is going to be standing here, where I am,' and they don't know that yet. And I didn't know it yet. I had no idea I was going to fall in love with the universities like I did.

Thus, "it could have been you" is a discourse that generates a voice or subjective positioning that allows Anna to see the expertise in her students and the novice in herself: "I know I'm new at everything, I don't mind

trying new things, I know I'm going to make plenty of mistakes, but I don't give up easily on myself." Furthermore, the perspective-taking of "it could have been you" (and it's corollary -- 'It could have been me') grounds her voice of solidarity and connectedness with the students: "I don't see them as any different than we are."

Sarah: "This is good work. This is important work."

In a similar way, Sarah, an English professor with almost 30 years of experience in open-admissions institutions, feels that her family's values have supported her work. She comes from a "family culture that says that [teaching] is a valuable thing to do" and which contained "a lot of teachers."

> [From my family, I learned that] this is good work, this is important work. Education is significant, and to be engaged in that is [important]. My father did not go on to college, just because of where he was, when it was. But he was probably the proudest and the most supportive of the fact that his wife and all his kids in some ways when into education.

Seeing hard work as good work appears to be a legacy from her immigrant grandparents. She was used to hearing, "Nobody said it was going to be easy" to the extent that even during graduate school in the early 1970s, "I never recognized that the culture valued things so differently. I always figured that if you were doing work that was significant and important, you'd be okay" financially.

Within such a discursive field that evaluates good work by its social significance, Sarah has developed a realistic, yet hopeful, approach to teaching and social change. Not having a "Romantic ... rosy optimism" about life has made her what she calls a "plodder."

> I was never, radical, I guess. I was always more liberal and always kind of maybe plodding, I guess (chuckle). I never thought it [social change] was going to happen quickly, but that that didn't mean you just kind of packed it up and went home. You just keep marching along (chuckle).

As an educator, Sarah draws most explicitly on the work of Mina Shaughnessy and Paulo Freire, who seem to offer a valuation of teaching that recognizes the 'hard work' of it along with its social significance. Both authors provide Sarah with ways of perceiving marginalized students as more than the sum of their academic (dis)abilities. For example, her description of an interaction with colleagues over student writing errors demonstrates her taking in of Shaughnessy's rejection of seeing students' languages as deficient (substandard rather than nonstandard) and of Freire's insistence that the "instructor is not ... the sole repository of knowledge."

> I know in my field, I've worked with faculty members who say, 'Grade a piece of work to death,' you know. They just obliterate, marking every single little thing. And, and I say to them, 'So, the student has learned what from this? That you know how to find everything?' So that teaching experience there, that's just a kind of punishing experience, to decimate their work like that. And the student doesn't learn anything from it. And it makes the instructor angry.... And so sometimes less is more. Do it for a paragraph and then tell the student to follow up on that.... See if they can identify it [an error] for themselves. So, I guess, getting them to think, in teaching terms, rather than strictly evaluation terms is important.

The point of view that Sarah espouses is that of the student, not the professor. Her teaching 'voice,' shaped by the beliefs of Freire and Shaughnessy, stands power relations on their head and radically revisions

the teacher-student relationship. Thus from this vantage point, marking the paper becomes an exercise of the professor's power rather than a learning experience for the student, from which he or she can gain some mastery of a skill. Sarah's willingness to see things from the student's perspective is emphasized by her insistence that students can "follow up" on a correction so that they can eventually "identify it for themselves." As Freire would, she takes the student's point of view and critically evaluates the power asymmetry that produced both the extensive correction and the professor's self-righteous anger.

Regina: "His struggle is my struggle. It's a struggle that we share."

In contrast to the supportive familial discourses surrounding Anna and Sarah, Regina, an English professor, exhibits a marked rejection of the values of what she describes as an insular, White, middle-class upbringing. Through her years of formal schooling and the beginning of her graduate training, she believes she was "a very typical kind of upper-middle-class snotty, full of myself, self-absorbed, egotistical." An inflated view of herself as "better" than others was informed by "authority figures ... so that's what I thought."

However, in graduate school she encountered "the successful student model," an educational philosophy derived from the actual study of the habits of good students. Such a philosophy asserts that "what determines success is very behavior-based. And is thus teachable." As the so e White teacher in a program designed to "jump start" underprepared college students for university-level work, she was compelled to recognize the extent of her privilege and that "my education made me." While in the

program, she found herself "silent" because for the first time in her life, she was listening to people of color and hearing their experiences.

> One of the most important things that I learned is that all the stereotypes that I had absorbed from the culture were totally wrong. In terms of African Americans [the student population of the education program].... And it was that shattering and the tearing down of all of that. And then the having of the human interaction, I think, that was most pivotal.... I think I gained, for the first time, which is the biggest criticism I can give of my White, middle-class education, is that I became aware of my privilege.... And that what really separated us was my privilege. And everything that I had, you know, by virtue of economics, race, etc., that my Daddy, on down that line, that that was what made us so different, and how awful it was.

Recognizing the extent of her privilege and that she was "historically complicit" in the social structures that generated it, Regina began seeing her existence and upbringing as filled with "this sickness of just, just devastating ignorance. And, a kind of, I guess, cultural self-absorption":

> But everybody was, who mattered, who I would think about, was just like my family. You know, it was this White, middle-class thing.... And as I've tried to explain, both to working-class and people of color who are my friends, the notion of how insignificant the other is, and how it's just totally not taken into account.

As a professor, Regina has chosen to teach half of her courses in composition and developmental writing, rather than in upper-level literature courses, out of the explicit desire to help the weakest students succeed in education. Furthermore, in rejecting the elitism of her upbringing, she has taken in the discourse of the "successful student model" and developed a number of voices that enable her to "show them the rules [of the game].

And to help them make the rules. And in some cases, [to] show them how to break the rules." For example, she believes that "it is very important for White people to publicly offer those critiques" [of racism]:

> When I'm teaching the classes on British Literature, I frequently pull in, the history of racism in our country, the history of class problems in our country. And try to do various, bringing them together, to give, to try to give them a longer sense of the history. That the people who made the slaves, originally came from England....

From her "shattering" experience, Regina understands "why it [is] not unfair of [students of color] to assume that a White person isn't going to care, isn't going to understand" the realities faced by them. Thus, in making such public critiques, she demonstrates a solidarity with her students. It is critical knowledge, much like the writing skills she teaches them, that she feels they need to understand in order to "reconfigure both the class and racial makeup of the society."

Intrigued by what I termed her 'selflessness' during the interview, I asked Regina how she manages this identification.

> Regina: I don't think of them [my students] as they. I mean, I don't feel that. Even though, yes, we're from totally different socioeconomic backgrounds, very different cultures. Ninety-nine percent of the time in English 1300, we have different racial backgrounds, dahduhdahduah. But I don't see them [as different]. I know absolutely that if we went out socially, we would. But when they're in my class, there's a we.
>
> TB: Now, on what basis do you create that we? What keeps you all together?
>
> Regina: Their goals.

TB: Which are?

Regina: Which are my goals. And that's the only thing that I'm there for. To get them ready. If they want to be a computer scientist, okay. Well, English 1300, you've got to pass it. So, the only thing I'm about is getting you the skills so you can move forward.

With much conviction, Regina sees herself, an educator, as existing solely for the students' progress -- her goals are their goals. It seems, then, that this voice of identification is tied to the "shattering" experience, which allowed her to find a subjective position of solidarity with her students. Interesting is that while Regina acknowledges their common goals in the classroom, she admits that such solidarity is a creation of the classroom environment and does not extend into the social arena -- "I know absolutely that if we went out socially, we would [be seen or see ourselves as different]." This observation seems to point to the dynamic possibilities for change that schooling carries within and despite an oppressive social reality (hooks, 1994).

Julie: "We're human. We're not gods. We work really hard."

A sociologist, Julie found both support for and a rejection of her agency during her upbringing. While Julie's father advocated the attainment of degrees for all his children - "I grew up in a family that stressed education, because my father didn't want us doing the same thing that he had to do" - he also expressed much fear that a child of his, and in particular a female child, might consider her book knowledge more valuable than his life experience.

> I mean, he wanted, pushed us to go, but yet was afraid that we would just start disrespecting him, I think, or see him as less valid.... So, it was this dual thing going on. And you were sort of in this damned if you do, damned if you don't sort of mode.

This "dual thing" left Julie with little self-confidence and a lingering question of whether she would ever know enough to teach. However, because her father advocated education as key to social mobility, she also recognized the value of academic achievement. This twoness seems to have made her responsive to a particular discourse on social inequality which she encountered in graduate school.

> A professor [teaching] a course on inequality and homelessness ... was actually lecturing to his students, about this idea of you, you can't tell a homeless or the poor or people on welfare, 'You need to just go out and pull yourself up by your bootstraps.' That that's part of that American cultural values that we have about, you know, working hard and all that.... He was trying to make the point that you need to have social policies in place, and a safety net... and that you needed to create the structure of opportunity for, for people that are on welfare, or homeless, or whatever. And it occurred to me that that was the same thing with students. That you just couldn't say to a student, 'Well, if you work hard enough, if you study hard enough, you should get this.' It seemed to me that you needed to create, I needed to create, if I could, mechanisms that would allow students, if they could avail themselves and take advantage of them, that they could learn, they could literally pull themselves up.... You try to give them the tools, but it's up to them to use them.... I would think that no matter what school I was at, one would, one would try to have the philosophy that some students may need you to create an opportunity for them.

Interesting about Julie is that she has created an educational philosophy that combines the "bootstraps" metaphor -- that each person has an

obligation to work toward social mobility -- with an understanding of social inequality. In this way, she reveals a commitment to American values about school as a route to economic and social mobility as well as a recognition that such mobility requires the creation of assistance for those in need.

One mechanism for helping students take advantage of school involves using her own life as an example of how hard work and structural opportunity can change someone's existence. For example, after inviting students to verbalize their beliefs about welfare and its recipients, she reveals to her students the fact that earlier in her life, she was on public assistance.

> It's actually kind of fun because you let them go on and on and on, and just dig a bigger hole, a grave, and then you sit back and you just kind of say, 'Well, now, you're talking about me.' And then, first, it's like, 'Oh my God, oh my God.' But then, when they realize you're not going to get back and lash out or have hurt feelings, but you just basically then start saying, 'Well, but let's talk about why I'm not in that situation anymore. I got some opportunities. There was a student loan program'.... What I'm hoping for is that for a few women in the class that might be in my situation, might be a single-mother with kids, might be needing some welfare assistance, that she says, 'Gee, well maybe this isn't such a far-fetched dream after all. Maybe I could get out of this and get a job.... And I could support myself. Maybe this isn't so crazy.'

Being "fairly open about disclosing things about myself" means that Julie talks about her successes as well as her failures with her students. She brings in drafts of published articles and shows rejections letters from unpublished manuscripts, all in an effort to demonstrate to students that professors are "human. We're not gods. We work really hard."

> It's the same thing with the Stats class. Most of the students are afraid of math. And they're scared. And I tell them, I'm like, 'Look,

> I hate math too. I don't like it. I'm not really good at it. But I know enough of it to teach this class, and I understand it well enough to do my research, so you can learn this too. And, if I can learn it, you can learn it.'

In being human toward her students, Julie does not simply want to make them feel good. The most meaningful teaching evaluation she has received described her as having "just the right combination of authority, intelligence, and compassion." While she works hard to get her students "to be critical thinkers and not accept everything they read," she also recognizes that compassion plays a key role in fostering that intellectual development.

> Maybe it's the compassion that's the tool, that gets them to take a risk and try this. That she's not going to say, 'This was a stupid thing to say.' She's not going to harangue me in front of the whole class and say, 'This was like the dumbest thing I've ever heard in my 20 years of teaching.' So maybe the compassion is the tool, that gives students the courage to be a little bit more intellectually critical..... I imagine bootstraps could actually be a combination [of skills and self-confidence].... I mean, if you don't have the self-confidence to use the tools, what's the point of having the tools? I mean, I think that they're sort of symbiotic.

Thus, the duality that Julie inherited from her father's contradictory discourse about education seems to have made her willing to see education as both a personal responsibility and a social activity, as requiring both a student's individual initiative as well as a supportive environment created by teachers.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The discourse-to-voice-method and the findings of this study have several implications for further research and theorizing in the area of multicultural education. First, a focus on discourse orients our research and analytical attention on the fact that we inherit, take on, and amend structures of thought that predate our individual existence. Such is, on the one hand, a very humbling realization. However, in the area of multicultural and anti-oppression education, it can be a cornerstone for teacher education efforts, enabling us to see how individuals make up society and how social forces work through people.

Second, rather than decide a priori the key discourses for an interviewee, the discourse-to-voice-centered method follows the interviewee's lead in identifying the kinds of shared meanings that have influenced her life. From such an emic approach to data analysis, it becomes possible to see similarities and differences in what individuals perceive as worldviews helpful to their teaching.

Third, although this study focused on the pedagogy of college-level educators, the concept of discourse has implications for teacher education. As previous research has shown, teacher beliefs are resistant to change (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Stein, 1999). And while this study is retrospective rather than prospective, the consistent finding that all four of the women have found key supports for their pedagogy in their disciplines is intriguing. The environmentalist arguments found in psychology, sociology's stratification theories, Freirean ideas of teaching, and models of successful students are among the key discourses which the professors encountered in their studies and which have guided their practice.

Interesting about this list is that only one of the key discourses that the teachers draw upon centers on a social division. This is not to say that the professors are unaware of racism and classism, but it suggests that their method of providing their students with a strong education is to appeal to very democratic ways of seeing themselves and others. Thus, emphasized in these discourses are the potential for students to develop skills and knowledge and the responsibility of educators to assist in that development. Further research is needed to determine whether other college faculty utilize similar discourses to scaffold their teaching philosophies. However, such inquiry may reveal that teaching against the grain is less about knowing particular race-, class-, or gender-specific concepts and more about deeply understanding the philosophical underpinnings of one's discipline and having opportunities to discuss the social consequences of such underpinnings. Encouraging about the discourses that the professors mentioned was that they were neither jargon-laden nor privy only to specialists in their fields. Rather, they represented broad ways of accounting for human possibility and agency. Thus, one possible avenue for encouraging antiracist educators may be to help students develop a deep rather than surface-level grasp of their areas of study. With such understanding, educators might be better able to understand connections between their classroom and social reality.

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